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# ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

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## THOUGHTS ON THE EASTERN QUESTION.

*From the London Herald of Peace.*

Two sects of professed Christians, representing the Roman and Greek churches, have long contended for the custody of what are called holy places in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and their pretensions have been espoused, as an instrument of political power, by France as the patron of the former, and by Russia as the patron of the latter. It would seem, that some time ago, the French government commenced a series of intrigues at the court of the Sultan, with a view to obtain some privileges in favor of the Latins, or professors of the Roman Catholic faith at Jerusalem, which were supposed to have been procured at the expense and to the detriment of the members of the Greek church. This gave the Emperor of Russia precisely the pretext he wanted for quarrelling with the Turk. He accordingly began to send angry remonstrances to the Sultan, which led to long negotiations, ending in the proclamation by the latter of a firman, containing "the most solemn promises of the maintenance of the ancient rights which had been conceded by the Porte to the Greek communities." But, though this act was satisfactory in itself, there were certain formalities necessary to give it validity and force, which, the Emperor of Russia alleges, were neglected by the Turkish government. These formalities consisted in the proclamation and registration of the firman at Jerusalem. After renewed expostulations, however, this point also was conceded, and "the firman was finally read and registered at Jerusalem." But the Czar now complains, that some of the provisions contained in this document have been openly transgressed. "The most flagrant violation of it," he says in the circular note recently addressed by him to the other governments of Europe, "has been the delivery to the Latin Patriarch of the key of the principal church at Bethlehem." Now, this does really seem to constitute the one grievance upon which, as a pretext at least, Europe is to be plunged into a general war; for the breach of faith involved in the violation of this article, was avowedly made the ground of the treaty demanded by Prince Menschikoff on his arrival at Constantinople.

It is impossible not to feel irrepressible indignation and disgust at the prostitution of the holy name of Christ, in connection with this most miserable business. We believe it now unquestionably proved, that there is not the smallest particle of authentic historical evidence to identify the particular localities where our Saviour was born and suffered and died. The

strong probability is, judging by the only guide we have, the topographical descriptions given in the New Testament of the places in and about Jerusalem, that they *cannot have been* on the spots now indicated by the traditions of the Romish Church. But, whether they were or not, what a pitiful travesty is it upon that system of benevolence and brotherly love which he came to teach, and which he affectingly exemplified by a life whose whole course

"Was one full stream of love from font to sea,"

to find his professed disciples ready to cut each others' throats, and let loose the dogs of war upon all Christendom, on questions "concerning the key of the Church of Bethlehem, and the silver star placed on the Altar of the Nativity, or the possession of the grotto of Gethsemane." Miserable fanatics! cannot they hear the voice which rises from that sepulchre, around which they are drawing their swords so frantically; "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen." Is it possible that the language of the Holy One and the Just, does not sometimes sweep with a strange, reproachful meaning through the souls of those rival priests, who are constantly urging on the kings of the earth to fight for the respective pretensions they put forth to be his genuine disciples, *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love another?*

But why talk we of fanaticism? Whatever may have been the case in former ages, the men who now brawl and wrangle about the "holy places," have not even that wretched apology for their conduct. They use the hallowed name as a hypocritical pretext under which to cloak their own selfishness, cupidity and ambition."

The writer proceeds to contrast the wild, phrenzied panic of last year with the recent assurance of the British Minister, "that the most cordial unanimity now exists between France and England on the oriental question," and to show how that panic in all probability, occasioned the whole danger of war against Turkey. The Czar, learning that England and France were, or would soon be, in open or virtual rupture, and thus could not be brought to unite in any effective opposition to his long and fondly cherished schemes of aggression, seized what he deemed a favorable opportunity for his purpose.

"Now does not this "modern instance" abundantly confirm the doctrine of the peace party, as to the supreme folly of large military armaments in time of peace? Whether the issue of the quarrel between Russia and Turkey, be peace or war, it cannot fail to bring discredit upon this irrational policy. For, what, let us ask, is the real ground of the alarm felt throughout Europe at this hour, that hostilities must almost inevitably break out, if it be not, that there are great masses of armed men in readiness to be precipitated in a moment at each other, in obedience to the choler or caprice of any one of the powers that are playing the game of their own selfish and ambitious rivalry, at the expense of the tranquillity and happiness of the human race? We wish it carefully noted, that this is no question of national emulation, but purely one of dynastic aggrandizement. No man believes that the Russian people, who, as all travellers agree, are remarkably quiet and stay-at-home in their habits, have any disposition to overrun Western Europe. Nor would England and France, we feel persuaded, be ruffled with the slightest apprehension if an *unarmed* and trading community of Greeks or Russians had peaceful possession of Constantinople; for the only result would be an immense impulse given to those commercial relations which bind the countries of Europe in amity and mutual dependence. The only danger, therefore, is felt to arise from the personal ambition of the Czar, as the master of a million of armed men. We affirm then, and re-affirm, that standing armies are kept up, not as a security for the nations (for none of the nations of Eu-

rope have the smallest interest or inclination to fight with each other) but purely to gratify the vanity and subserve the sordid ambition of their rulers. Why then, should the people leave in the hands of these men this terrible instrument with which to work their own woe? Did not the poet Cowper say well, when, in speaking of great princes, "who make the sorrows of mankind their sport," he exclaimed,

" Nations would do well  
To extort their truncheons from the puny hands  
Of heroes whose infirm and baby minds  
Are gratified with mischief, and who spoil,  
Because men suffer it, their toy, the world."

If we are asked how this is to be accomplished, the answer is obvious. Precisely by those means employed and recommended by the Peace Society,—the ceaseless agitation of the subject, in every form that can help to create such an irresistible public opinion in Europe, as shall in the end make itself felt, even in the cabinets of the most absolute monarchs, and insist upon wrenching from the grasp of those "infirm and baby minds," the tremendous weapon with which they constantly terrify and torment their subjects.

Should the present agitation, however, end *without* war, it will afford, if possible, a still more striking illustration of the fatuity of the system we condemn. For, what is on all hands the acknowledged and the only reason for hoping that the crisis will pass without actual collision? Is it not the conviction, that the Monarchs of Europe *dare* not tempt the hazards of war, lest the first cannon that is fired should make their own crazy thrones totter and tremble? They are not withheld by any compassion for the miseries of mankind, or by any sense of the awful moral responsibility they would incur, but by the dread lest, if the fire be once kindled, it should break forth into a conflagration which would enwrap themselves and their dynastic interests in its inextinguishable flames. What, then, can be more preposterous than to find men draining the very life-blood of the nations over which they rule, to make mighty preparations for war, which, when the occasion comes, they *dare* not use?

Whatever may be the merits or demerits of our proposed plan of arbitration, those who discuss it, uniformly overlook what we deem its most essential feature. What we recommend as a preventive of war is not arbitration, but *stipulated* arbitration, that is, requiring the nations during a time of peace to bind themselves by a positive treaty, that when any dispute arises between them which cannot be settled by ordinary negotiation, they will refer the disputed point to the judgment and decision of arbitrators. The great and obvious superiority of this plan over any mediation called in after the quarrel has actually burst forth into mutual menace, is the opportunity it affords for the subsidence of angry passion, and its prevention of those overt acts from which the contending parties, it is alleged, cannot recede without loss of honor and dignity. The reason, we are told, why the Emperor of Russia *must* march his armies into the Danubian principalities, is the fact, that he has gone too far to retreat, without making some demonstration of force, were it not only to soothe and conceal his irritated vanity. But our method would preclude matters going so far as to give rise to such a necessity. Let us suppose that a treaty of arbitration had existed between Russia and Turkey when this question respecting the holy places, and the rights of the Greek church, began to be mooted between them. When it was found, after the preliminary interchange of notes, and the usual diplomatic negotiation, that the two governments could not satisfactorily adjust their conflicting claims, the matter of course would, pursuant to the provisions of the treaty, have been submitted to some impartial umpire. And can any man doubt that a third party thus called in, would have found a solution which

would have met the exigencies of the case? Nay, would not the very overture recently made by the Porte to grant full protection and unlimited liberty to all Christians in his dominions, have met the requirements of the Czar without endangering his own authority? It may be said, we know, that Russia employed her demands only as a pretext for a long-conceived and pre-determined aggression on Turkey, and would therefore, in spite of the treaty, have refused to accept arbitration. Even if it were so, still the existence of the treaty would have done good. For so bare-faced a refusal to abide by engagements solemnly and voluntarily incurred, would have put her so obviously and conspicuously in the wrong, and would have so completely torn off the disguise from her ambitious designs, as to leave her without the show of a defence against the public opinion of Europe.

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#### COBDEN ON TURKEY.

In 1836, Richard Cobden published a work of much research to counteract a panic in England about supposed aggressions from Russia. A few extracts may be interesting and useful at the present crisis:—

Down to our own time, the Turks governed a territory so vast and fertile that, in ancient ages, it comprised Egypt, Phœnicia, Syria, Greece, Carthage, Thrace, Pontus, Bithynia, Cappadocia, Epirus, and Armenia, besides other less renowned empires. From three of these states went forth, at various epochs, conquerors who vanquished and subjected the then entire known world. The present lamentable condition of this fine territory, so renowned in former times, arises from no change in the seasons, or defalcation of nature. It still stretches from 34 to 43 deg. north, within the temperate zone, and upon the same parallels of latitude as Spain, France, and all the best portion of the United States. "Mount Hæmus," says Malte Brun, "is still covered with verdant forests; the plains of Thrace, Macedonia, and Thessaly yield abundant and easy harvests to the husbandman; a thousand ports and a thousand gulfs are observed on the coasts, peninsulae and islands. The calm billows of these tranquil seas still bathe the base of the mountains covered with vines and olive trees. But the populous and numerous towns mentioned by ancient writers, have been changed into deserts beneath a despotic government." All the authorities upon this country assure us that the soil of many parts of Turkey is more fruitful than the richest plains of Sicily. When grazed by the rudest plough, it yields a more abundant harvest than the finest fields between the Eure and the Loire, the granary of France. Mines of silver, copper and iron, are still existing, and salt abounds in the country. Cotton, tobacco and silk might be made the staple exports of this region, and their culture admits of almost unlimited extension throughout the Turkish territory; whilst some of the native wines are equal to those of Burgundy. Almost every species of tree flourishes in European Turkey. The heights on the Danube are clad with apple, pine, cherry and apricot trees; whole forests of these may be seen in Wallachia; and they cover the hills of Thrace, Macedonia and Epirus. The olive, orange, mastic, fig and pomegranate, the laurel, myrtle, and nearly all the beautiful and aromatic shrubs and plants, are natural to this soil. Nor, are the animal productions less valuable than those of vegetable life. The finest horses have been drawn from this quarter to improve the breeds of Western Europe; and the rich pastures of European Turkey are, probably, the best adapted in the world for rearing the largest growths of cattle and sheep.